

Rome's Trade Center —How It Came to Be

BY WILLIAM CLARK

(Chicago Tribune Press Service)

ROME, Sept. 16.—Five miles southwest of the center of Rome in the most modern section of the Eternal City are four palaces of gleaming marble which Benito Mussolini once thought would house a World's fair. Today they constitute a World Trade center, probably the newest on earth inasmuch as it has been open only two weeks.

The center is the project of Permindex (Permanent Industrial exhibit), a holding company domiciled in Switzerland and organized with Italian, Swiss, Canadian, and United States capital. The trade center is a sort of operating subsidiary whose officials emphasize that it is a service organization in the field of international trade, not merely the producer of a fair.

Work Started in '37
Mussolini began work on the buildings in 1937 with the idea that he could stage a Rome World fair in 1940 or 1942. The war erased those plans, and the buildings—which reportedly could not now be duplicated for less than \$5 million dollars—have lain idle most of the time since. The Permindex organization has made some improvements and alterations and occupies them under a nine year lease from an Italian government-owned insurance company with option to renew for another nine years.

The four buildings (the trade center designates them as "palaces" and you won't argue when you see them) together have some 400,000 square feet of floor area. Take away corridors and offices and that leaves 250,000 square feet of actual exhibit space. There also is about 400,000 square feet of rentable wall area which is considered highly desirable for certain types of display. About 60 per cent of the display space is occupied. Italian manufacturers account for 20 per cent of that. All told, 26 countries are represented among the exhibitors. Emphasis is on consumer goods.

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narrow beam from a search unit resting on the animal's side. The waves penetrate the animal until an interface, such as the junction of fat and lean, is encountered.

Ultra-Sonic Picture
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The first item we saw on display was the name product of American Trampoline company. Our guide explained that trade center personnel had helped the company to get space for trampoline installations in Rome, had provided the company with information on local laws and regulations, and had helped to work out an insurance program.

The trade center expects to supply information on export-import costs and regulations for any transaction which may be made between exhibitors and their buyers no matter what countries may be involved. It will process a buyer's order if the exhibitor-seller wishes.

This is why it hopes to be known as a service organization and not a trade fair producer. Most of the exhibits at the center will be changed from time to time. The buildings are open daily until 11 p. m. Accredited buyers are admitted free. Others pay.

Permindex has 20 stockholders. The United States is represented on the board of directors by Clay Shaw, director of the International Exposition hall in New Orleans.

Outstanding Crossroad

Tho the presence of the four palaces must have provided Permindex with a remarkable windfall in housing, company officials say that Rome was chosen as the site because it is an outstanding commercial crossroad. More air lines serve Rome than any other European city except Paris, and the Rome airport experiences fewer weather close-downs than does that of Paris.

The center, as noted, is some distance from the center of old Rome, but it is in this direction that Rome is building—toward the sea. There is plenty of space, and builders run less chance of running into a ruin that will encourage the government to take over the property when they excavate for foundations. The ministry of commerce and other new government buildings will be erected close to the trade center. A new hotel under construction nearby will have suites consisting of bath, bedroom, and office.

The trade center was toured by members of the Chicago World Trade mission, an 80 man group visiting European trade fairs under sponsorship of the Chicago Association of Commerce.

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Thu, Jun 14, 2018